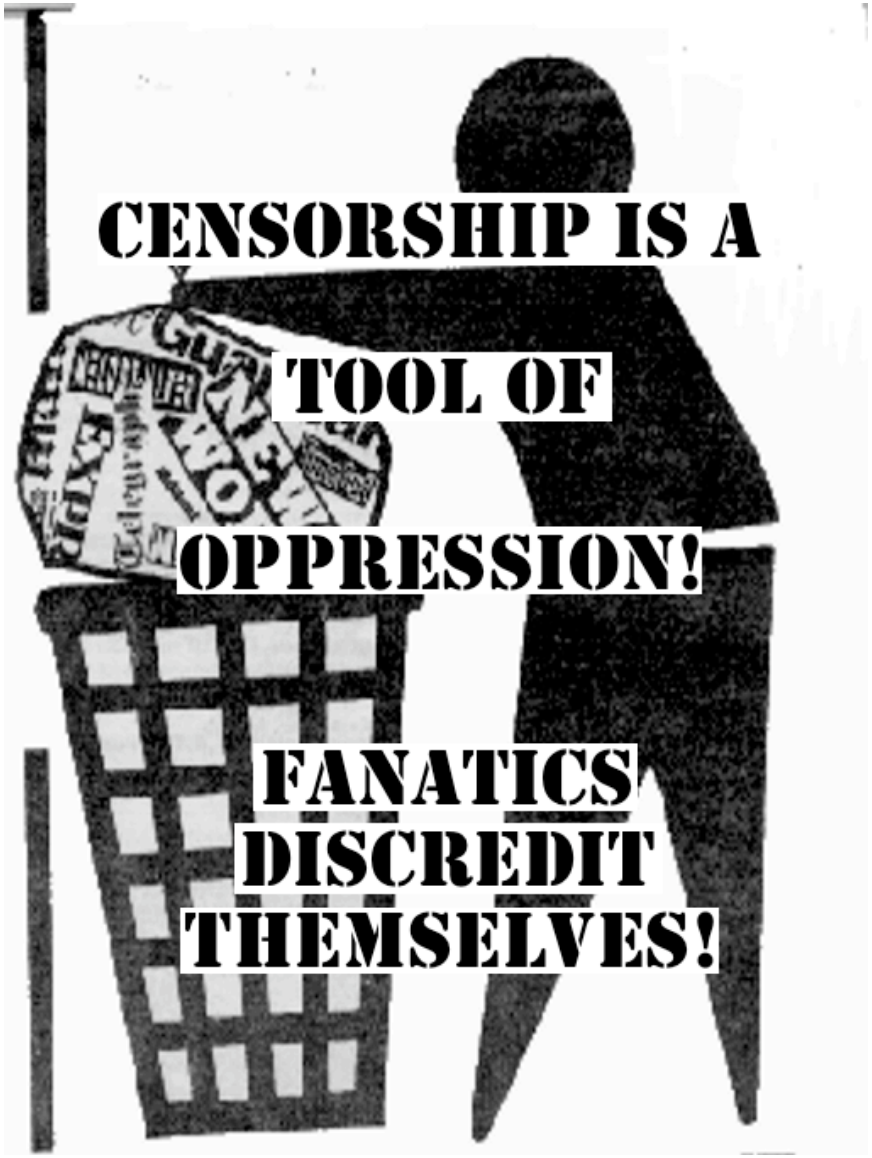
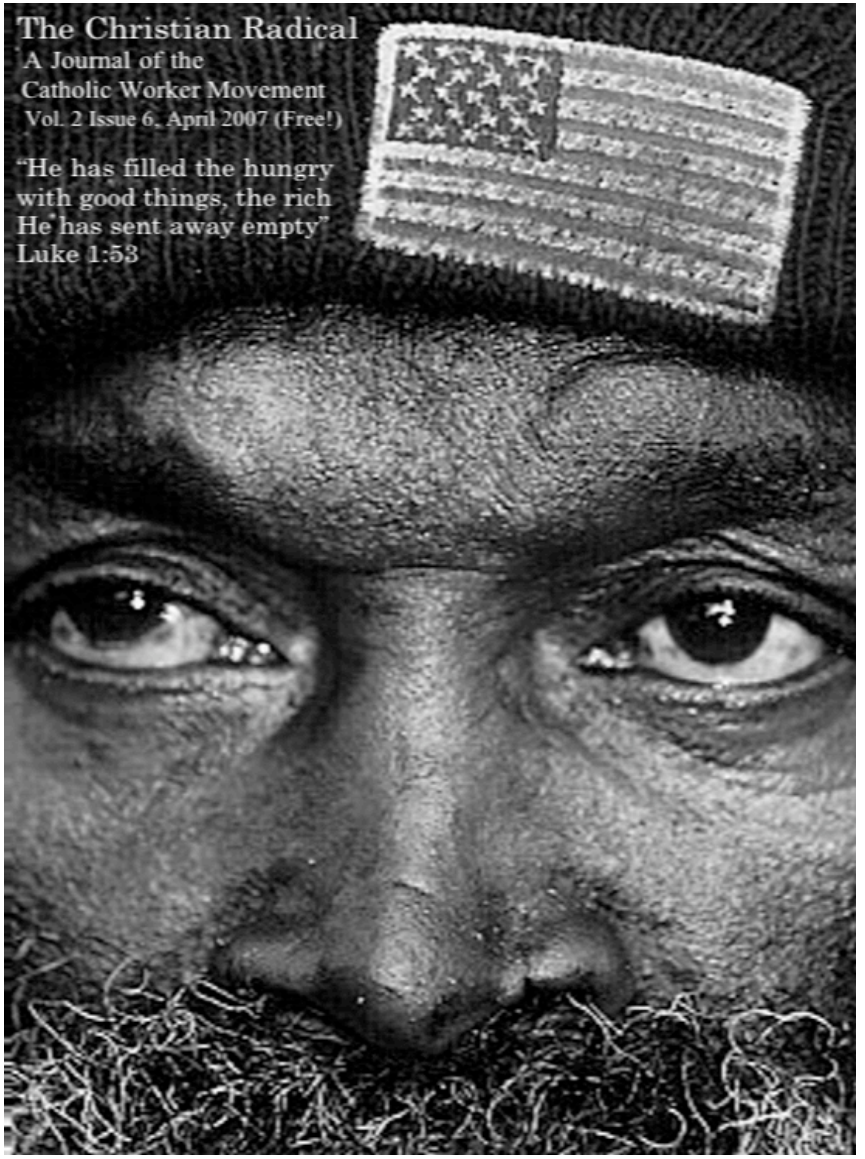

CENSORSHIP IS A
TOOL OF
OPPRESSION!
FANATICS
DISCREDIT
THEMSELVES!


The Christian Radical
A Journal of the
Catholic Worker Movement
Vol. 2 Issue 6, April 2007 (Free!)
"He has filled the hungry
with good things, the rich
He has sent away empty"
Luke 1:53

Magnificat anima mea Dominum
Et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo.
Quia respexit humilitatem ancillæ suæ: ecce enim ex
hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.
Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est, et sanctum
nomen eius.
Et misericordia eius a progenie in progenies timentibus eum.
Fecit potentiam in bracchio suo, dispersit superbos
mente cordis sui.
Deposuit potentes de sede et exaltavit humiles.
Esurientes implevit bonis et divites dimisit inanes,
Suscepit Israel puerum suum recordatus misericordiæ
suæ,
Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros, Abraham et
semini eius in sæcula.

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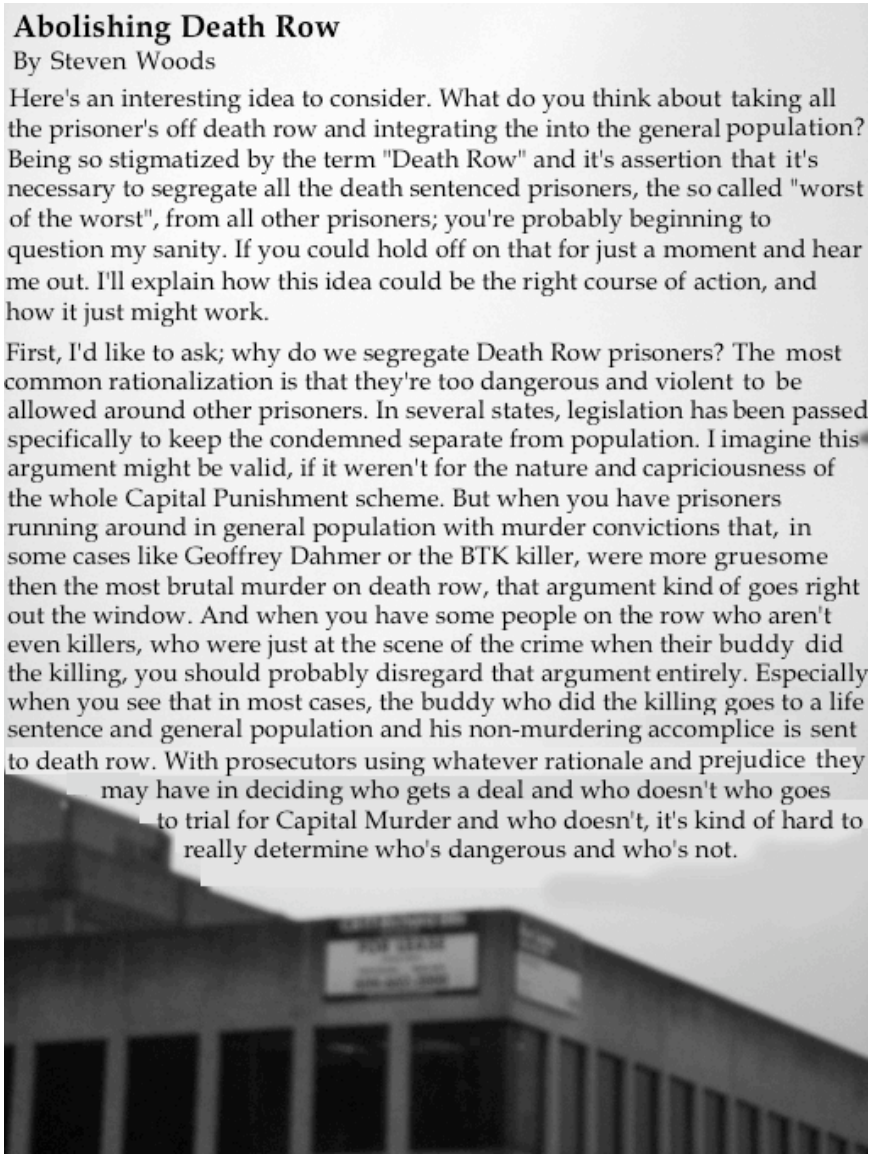


Abolishing Death Row

By Steven Woods

Here's an interesting idea to consider. What do you think about taking all the prisoner's off death row and integrating the into the general population? Being so stigmatized by the term "Death Row" and it's assertion that it's necessary to segregate all the death sentenced prisoners, the so called "worst of the worst", from all other prisoners; you're probably beginning to question my sanity. If you could hold off on that for just a moment and hear me out. I'll explain how this idea could be the right course of action, and how it just might work.

First, I'd like to ask; why do we segregate Death Row prisoners? The most common rationalization is that they're too dangerous and violent to be allowed around other prisoners. In several states, legislation has been passed specifically to keep the condemned separate from population. I imagine this argument might be valid, if it weren't for the nature and capriciousness of the whole Capital Punishment scheme. But when you have prisoners running around in general population with murder convictions that, in some cases like Geoffrey Dahmer or the BTK killer, were more gruesome then the most brutal murder on death row, that argument kind of goes right out the window. And when you have some people on the row who aren't even killers, who were just at the scene of the crime when their buddy did the killing, you should probably disregard that argument entirely. Especially when you see that in most cases, the buddy who did the killing goes to a life sentence and general population and his non-murdering accomplice is sent to death row. With prosecutors using whatever rationale and prejudice they may have in deciding who gets a deal and who doesn't who goes to trial for Capital Murder and who doesn't, it's kind of hard to really determine who's dangerous and who's not.

But my best argument to refute the notion that death row prisoners are so violent and dangerous that they must be kept separate from all others is that men and women sentenced to death have the most incentive NOT to act violently. Ask yourself, who has more to lose: a person who's serving a sentence of life without parole and who's looking at a long existence locked up and has no real hope to escape their fate; or a prisoner who's facing death and the only chance they have for life is to be non-violent?

I'm sure it would be practical to, once a death sentenced prisoner is issued a date of execution, remove them to a segregated area of the prison to maintain safety and security; but until that time comes it is more beneficial to the prisoners, the prison workers and officers, and to the tax payers to abolish death row and desegregate it's population.

As I mentioned in the opening paragraph, desegregating death row prisoners would entail integrating them into the general population. This isn't just some fanciful notion I pulled from a convoluted daydream. There's actually precedent. In 1996 the State of Missouri did an experiment. They took several well behaved death row prisoners and placed them among the general population of prisoners. After a period of observation, they found that this was actually a viable solution to the problems inherent in keeping the condemned in indefinite solitary confinement. They begun to empty out the death row, mixing it's population amongst the rest of the maximum security prisoners in the state. This has worked out so well that now, eleven years later, Missouri no longer has a death row though it still carries Capital Punishment and has several prisoners under a sentence of death.

Nearly everyone concerned benefits from this integration. First, there's the condemned. By removing them from isolation and placing them amongst their fellow human beings and offering them opportunities to work, recreate in groups, to better work on their cases with a wider access to legal help and law libraries, and giving them better living conditions, you give the prisoner a better sense of dignity and hope. The prisoner isn't subjected to the despair they feel living in a cage for 23 hours a day with the specter of death hovering, permeating every thought. This boosts their morale and makes the environment a lot safer for the prison guards and other prisoners. But most importantly, it allows the prisoner to feel human.

Besides making them safer, integrating death row prisoners into general population signifying reduces guards and prison officials workload, to the benefit of both their and the tax payers paying the costs of added security inherent in housing death row separate from the rest of the prison. Keeping prisoners in segregation requires three guards to be in the living area at all times. Even when the prisoner is taken from the housing area to visitation, medical, or elsewhere, a two guard escort is used for security purposes. These costly security measures are no longer an issue once death row prisoners are assimilated into the general population. The prison guards already in place out there are enough to maintain safety and order, so the prison officials need no longer worry about the extra manpower, or about being constantly understaffed as the prisons so often are. The extra cell space created from emptying the housing areas once kept solely for death row also benefits prison officials. They can begin to use the space to alleviate the overcrowding often burdening the prison system. For prison officials and tax payers, this integration is a no lose proposition.

Still have doubts that this is the solution to fixing death row's current inhumane conditions? My treatise is by no means comprehensive. I would suggest that you study this further by checking out Missouri's model. If it can work for them it can work for us. The fact that it has worked for these past 11 years without any significant hitch is all the argument I feel we need. We should be petitioning our state legislatures to utilize Missouri's example; to abolish death row and place it's prisoner's into a humane environment. Anything less really should be unacceptable.

In Struggle and solidarity,
Steven Woods
www.drivemovement.org
www.moabolition.org (Missouri anti-DP group)

A Saint Patrick's Day Unnoticed.

By Chris Rooney

Today, March 17th was a lot of things, in Canada it was the national day of action against the Afghan war and in Vancouver BC it was also the start of "Celtic Fest" and finally it was the feast day of Saint Patrick of Ireland. I didn't quite put all that one together as I was crossing the Granville Bridge on my way to the Anti-War protest. I was going out primarily to take the photos for this months issue of the zine and to go to be in the march. This week is a big one internationally because it marks the anniversary of the British and North American invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, it is also an international week of actions to call for the end to war and for greater environmental accountability; the rally this year was for "Canada out of Afghanistan, into Kyoto".

As I was walking through the city I was repeating these lines from the Magnifficat in Luke's Gospel "He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty". I saw much contrast today, there was the contrast between the hand-over-fist-ed-ness of Celtic Fest, with booths erected all up and down Granville Street selling expensive trinkets amid people getting drunk early to celebrate. Under bridges and in alley's there were the soggy and dilapidated places where street people stash their things when they are awake, and in another part of the city there were activists and concerned citizens by the score milling about in the rain waiting for the march to start. I bought an expensive kilt from one of the stands that was setting up on Granville and with it stuffed into my bag I walked across downtown and fell into rank with the rest of the protesters.

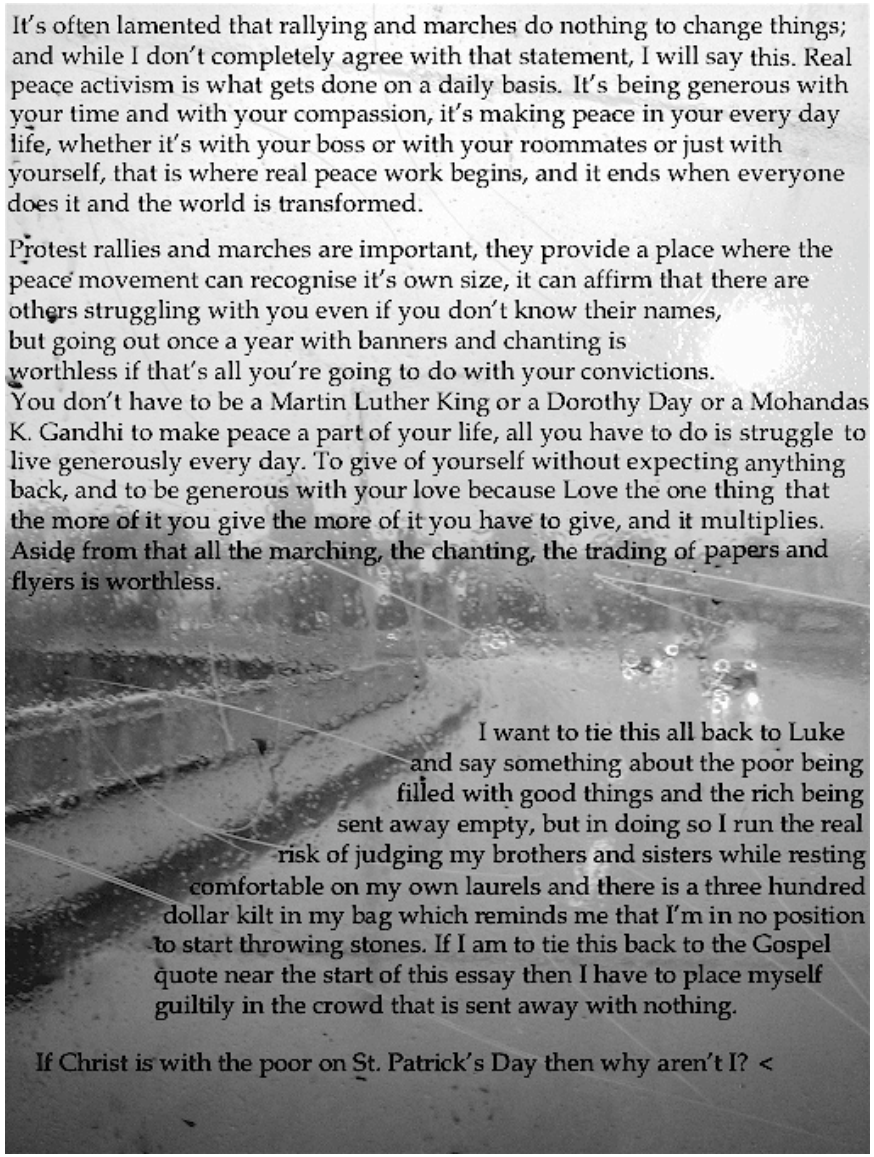
As we started our march up Robson I overheard someone saying that she doubted these rallies accomplished anything. And as I carried my end of a banner that read "War Resisters Welcome Here" I started to ask myself, where would Saint Patrick be on his feast day? Knowing very little about this early Celtic saint other than what gets told to you in childhood, like that he chased the snakes out of Ireland, and he is the patron saint of that country; I decided that Patrick, being a saint, and a lover of God would be where ever Christ was… so where was Christ on Saint Patrick's Day?

Certainly Christ is with the wounded and dying in Afghanistan and Iraq, He is with the soldiers of both sides, the militias, the refugees and their families, the mentally destroyed and most especially He is with the Children, Christ must be in the march because there are other Christians protesting here with me and bringing their non-violent witness to this event, but all this is stating the obvious. I'm not thinking hard enough…

So I asked myself again; where would Christ be on Saint Patrick's Day? And that's when it started to occur to me that there were three major events going on in the streets of Vancouver. Yah, there was Celtic Fest and there was the rally, but the one other thing that was going on and which I myself hadn't been mindful of until I started to think about it was this: there are thousands of people struggling to survive in this city, people to whom neither the sound and the fury of the anti-war rally nor the drunken revelry of Celtic Fest mattered except as an annoyance, or a lament, or as luxuries they could ill afford and hadn't the time for. And most important of all, it's with them that Christ is most present--today and every day.

Christ is present in the drafty, mouldy SRO hotel with the pregnant mom addicted to heroin, Christ is present with the binner who's been up since dawn and has a harder time finding bottles and stuff since the city started padlocking the dumpsters, Christ is with the old bum who's been roughed up by the cops and has had all his stuff taken from him again. Christ is with the woman who had her things stolen in the shelter while she slept her fitful sleep in dirty sheets. And if I were St. Patrick I'd be with them as well.

I spent $300 on that kilt, two weeks pay, I needed something to take on the road this summer and--unlike the people I described above--I can afford it. But does this mean I am entitled to it? My mom was telling me the other day about a documentary called "Reversal of Fortune" where the film makers gave a street person in LA ten thousand dollars to see what he'd do with it, the man gave it all away to other street people. I had three hundred dollars in my wallet today, I could have bought a lot of rain gear and taken it down town. Had I been St. Patrick today I think that's what I might have done.


It's often lamented that rallying and marches do nothing to change things; and while I don't completely agree with that statement, I will say this. Real peace activism is what gets done on a daily basis. It's being generous with your time and with your compassion, it's making peace in your every day life, whether it's with your boss or with your roommates or just with yourself, that is where real peace work begins, and it ends when everyone does it and the world is transformed.
Protest rallies and marches are important, they provide a place where the peace movement can recognise it's own size, it can affirm that there are others struggling with you even if you don't know their names, but going out once a year with banners and chanting is worthless if that's all you're going to do with your convictions. You don't have to be a Martin Luther King or a Dorothy Day or a Mohandas K. Gandhi to make peace a part of your life, all you have to do is struggle to live generously every day. To give of yourself without expecting anything back, and to be generous with your love because Love the one thing that the more of it you give the more of it you have to give, and it multiplies. Aside from that all the marching, the chanting, the trading of papers and flyers is worthless.
I want to tie this all back to Luke and say something about the poor being filled with good things and the rich being sent away empty, but in doing so I run the real risk of judging my brothers and sisters while resting comfortable on my own laurels and there is a three hundred dollar kilt in my bag which reminds me that I'm in no position to start throwing stones. If I am to tie this back to the Gospel quote near the start of this essay then I have to place myself guiltily in the crowd that is sent away with nothing.
If Christ is with the poor on St. Patrick's Day then why aren't I? <

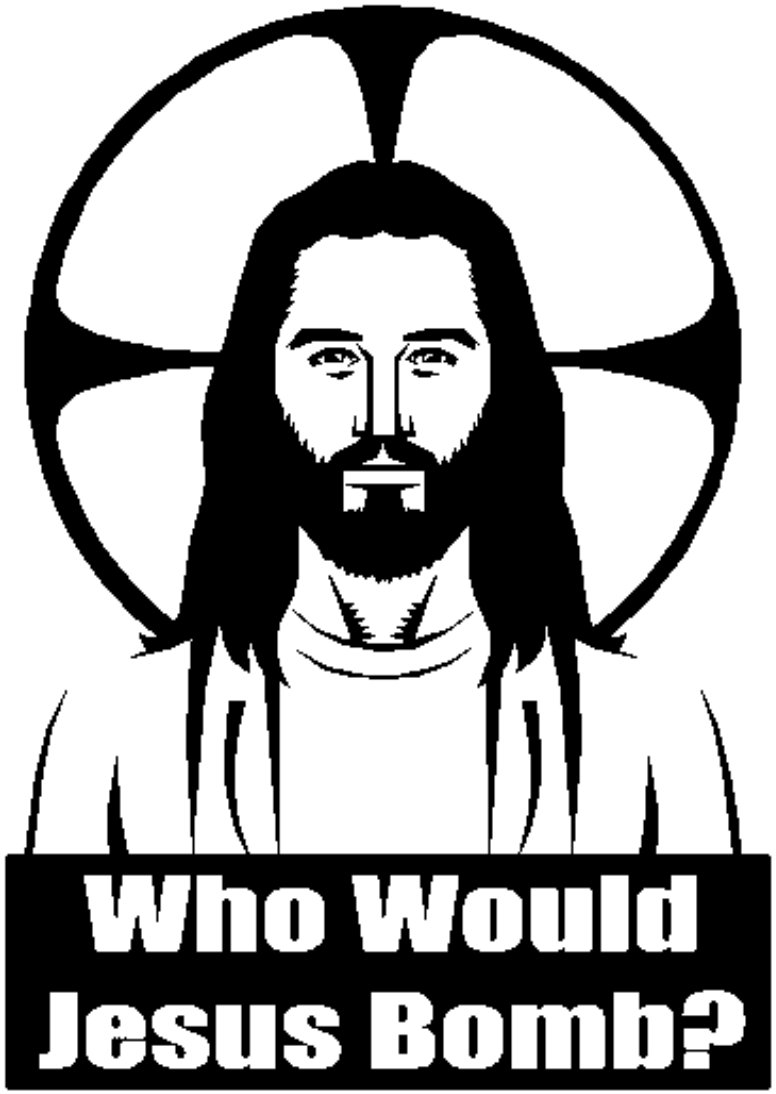
(Matthew 26: 47-58,
Mark 14: 43-54,
Luke 22: 47-54 and
John 18:1-15)

Taciturn--The Acceptable Year

By Brandon Gallaher
For Fr. Steven James

'Mais, voyant trop pour nier et trop peu pour m'assurer, je suis dans un état à plaindre'
'But seeing too much to deny, and too little to affirm, I am in a pitiable state'

'I, Malluch Bar Merari
Uphold the house
Right here in this garden.
Till judgement
My ear will hang
Before his word
Offers its fingers
To the print
Like the beak of a pelican
Disgorging hearing.
But I still hear only the dead.
I am the miracle they dare not relate.
One the physician misdiagnosed
(Symptoms for cure)
Not reporting to you
That I still heal from his touch.
Not enough
To be wounded once
By too eager a swordsman,
But the Galilean ran through
The rest of my senses.
And now you will say
(this is true)
I hear again,
But always once more,
Too much, and not enough.'



Jesus' Last Words to the Church

BY JOHN DEAR

This past spring, I received an invitation to meet the organizer of the National Prayer Breakfast, an evangelical Christian organization that brings together the president, members of Congress and the Supreme Court, and virtually every putative Christian in the government.

Mother Theresa famously addressed the gathering in the early '90s and fiercely denounced abortion. This year, Bono gave an equally forceful address, calling upon the government to end AIDS, HIV and extreme poverty in Africa.

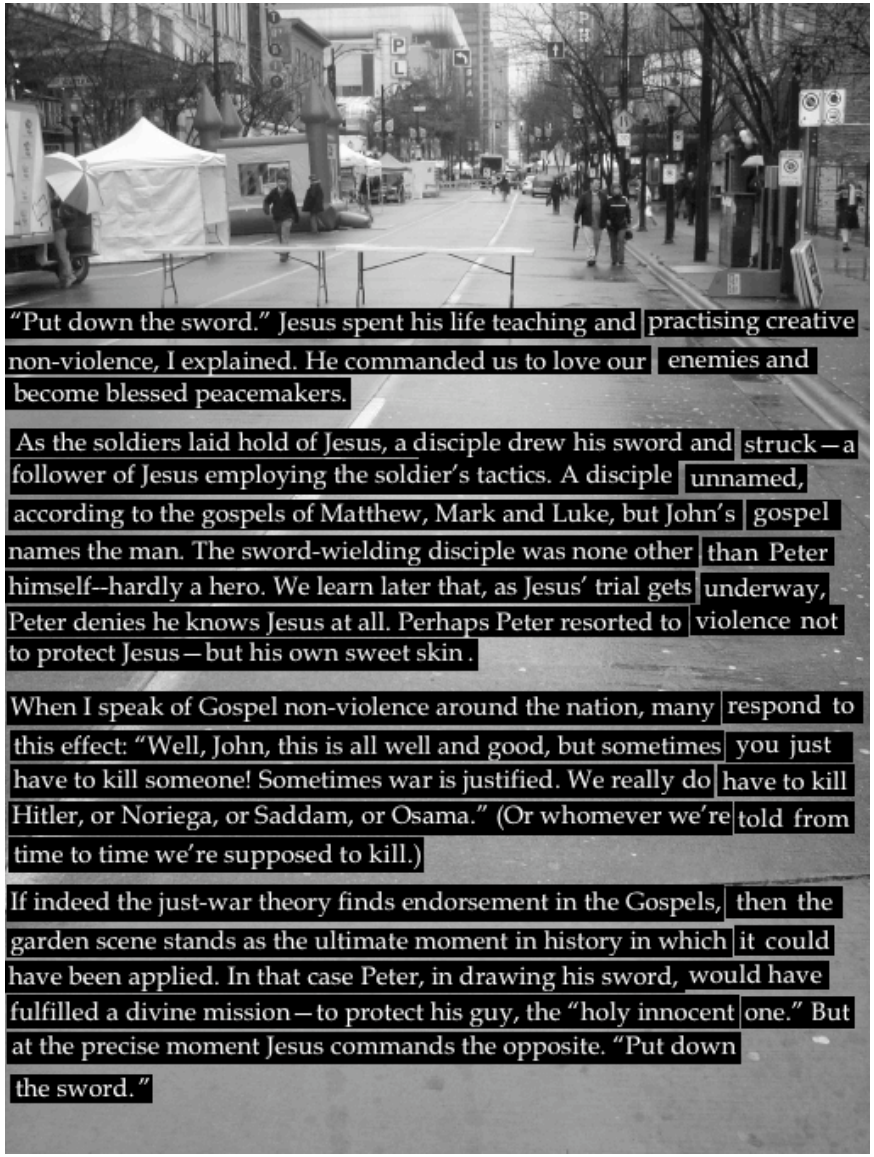
There was some discussion that they might invite me to speak. Unlikely. An ex-con and long-time anti-war activist, they'll never tolerate my addressing the evangelicals in the government about the Gospel of Jesus.

Nonetheless, I was glad to meet the coordinator—for decades Billy Graham's assistant and organizer—because I heard such good things about him.

He felt passionately about the Gospel of Jesus. Turns out, he had spent a great deal of time with Mother Theresa and made retreats at the Abbey of Gethsemani—two things we shared in common. I liked him immensely.

But what does one say to such a prestigious Christian? I heard he had a few things to discuss, but I wanted to get right to the point. We shook hands and I asked him, "As the soldiers approached Jesus in the Garden of Gesthemani, what last words did he say to the church?"

My new friend looked at me. He didn't know.


"Put down the sword." Jesus spent his life teaching and practising creative non-violence, I explained. He commanded us to love our enemies and become blessed peacemakers.
As the soldiers laid hold of Jesus, a disciple drew his sword and struck—a follower of Jesus employing the soldier's tactics. A disciple unnamed, according to the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, but John's gospel names the man. The sword-wielding disciple was none other than Peter himself--hardly a hero. We learn later that, as Jesus' trial gets underway, Peter denies he knows Jesus at all. Perhaps Peter resorted to violence not to protect Jesus—but his own sweet skin.
When I speak of Gospel non-violence around the nation, many respond to this effect: "Well, John, this is all well and good, but sometimes you just have to kill someone! Sometimes war is justified. We really do have to kill Hitler, or Noriega, or Saddam, or Osama." (Or whomever we're told from time to time we're supposed to kill.)
If indeed the just-war theory finds endorsement in the Gospels, then the garden scene stands as the ultimate moment in history in which it could have been applied. In that case Peter, in drawing his sword, would have fulfilled a divine mission—to protect his guy, the "holy innocent one." But at the precise moment Jesus commands the opposite. "Put down the sword."

I think this was the moment when the disciples finally understood Jesus and his teachings. They suddenly realize: He's deadly serious about peace, love and non-violence. I imagine them agape as the matter unfolded before them. Jesus would not defend himself with violence, a burden they could not share. And so off they ran, every man for himself. And Jesus endures his passion without anger, without fighting back. As Gandhi said, he practised the most perfect non-violence in history. I regard Jesus as the incarnation of non-violence, the embodiment of the God of love and peace.

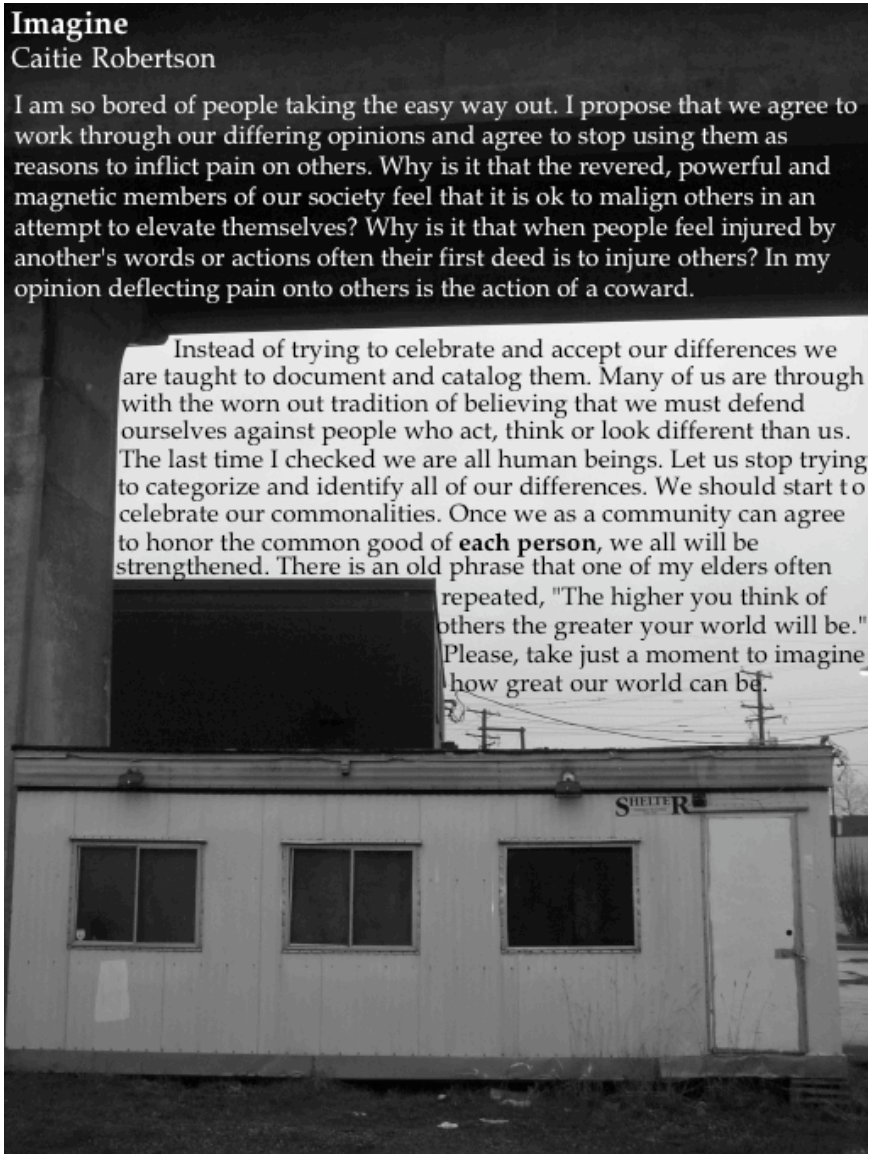
We have spent the last 1700 years, denying Jesus' final command. We have justified warfare, led our crusades, and stamped every bombing raid and nuclear weapon with our blessing.

But the commandment remains: "Put down the sword." I think one day the church will realize that the just war theory has no place in the Gospel. They'll realize it was by no means exemplified by the life of Jesus. And the theory will fall into disrepute. One day the church will teach only Gospel non-violence And Christians everywhere will quit the military and refuse to join. They'll obstruct warfare and beat all swords into plowshares.

I'm not the only one who thinks this. The U.S. Catholic Bishops Peace Pastoral letter of 1984 said non-violence was perfectly legitimate for Catholics. And on May 2, 2003, a few years before becoming pope, Benedict wrote: "There were not sufficient reasons to unleash a war against Iraq. To say nothing of the fact that, given the new weapons that make possible destructions that go beyond the combatant groups, today we should be asking ourselves if it is still licit to admit the very existence of a just war."

My new friend sat silent for a time. A look of thoughtfulness settled over his face and he said, "That is a very important observation." I pressed him further. I asked, how seriously do we want to take the commandments of Jesus? We can pray, go to church, read about him, and organize influential gatherings to lead others to him. But I think Jesus wants foremost for us to obey him—by putting down our swords, renouncing violent self-defense, tearing up the just war theory, abolishing our weapons, putting an end to our wars, and becoming people of universal, non-violent love. If we are serious about Jesus in these perilous times, we have to non-cooperate with every aspect of war.

The unarmed Christ wants his community, the church, to be a community of creative, loving non-violence, I submit. It's God's holy gift to the world. The challenge then is to take him at his word. <


Imagine
Caitie Robertson
I am so bored of people taking the easy way out. I propose that we agree to work through our differing opinions and agree to stop using them as reasons to inflict pain on others. Why is it that the revered, powerful and magnetic members of our society feel that it is ok to malign others in an attempt to elevate themselves? Why is it that when people feel injured by another's words or actions often their first deed is to injure others? In my opinion deflecting pain onto others is the action of a coward.
Instead of trying to celebrate and accept our differences we are taught to document and catalog them. Many of us are through with the worn out tradition of believing that we must defend ourselves against people who act, think or look different than us. The last time I checked we are all human beings. Let us stop trying to categorize and identify all of our differences. We should start to celebrate our commonalities. Once we as a community can agree to honor the common good of each person, we all will be strengthened. There is an old phrase that one of my elders often repeated, "The higher you think of others the greater your world will be." Please, take just a moment to imagine how great our world can be.

What Would St. Patrick Do?

A Letter from Frank Cordaro, DMCW
Friends;

You should count yourself lucky you weren't Irish and for peace in Colorado Springs this weekend. I just returned from a speaking trip, I was invited by the Colorado Springs Justice and Peace Commission to be on a panel to speak about the American tradition of civil disobedience and the need to nonviolently resist the Iraq war. The panel was scheduled for the evening of Sat March 17 - St Pats Day. That morning I joined other local peace folks in the Co Springs annual St Patrick's Day Parade.

I had no idea at the time that our walk in the St Pats Parade would be a great example of just why the American tradition of civil disobedience is so vital to maintaining our civil liberties and the right of free speech.

We were part of the Bookman parade entry, a local bookstore that paid its entry fee and was an accepted parade participant. The Bookman people are peace folks and they have been part of the parade the last couple of years. This year, as they did last year, folks marching with the Bookman mobile wore green T-shirts with the peace sign on the back and front. We also held peace banners.

All went well until we fell in line with the other parade entries, one block into the parade. We were greeted by a man who identified himself as a parade organizer he told us we were not a legitimate parade entry. The police were immediately called into the fray. And before any clarity and due process was afforded us, we were thrown off the parade route - some of us literally. Seven of us were arrested, cited with failing to desist or disperse and released. We feel we have a good case for police brutality.

Happy St Patrick's Day!

Fair and Balanced, a look at news coverage of the parade

By Chris Rooney:

Since Frank sent this out over the National CW e-mail list this incident has received a fair bit of press, some of which I posed to www.christianradical.blogspot.com as I received it. Michael de Yolanna a writer for The Colorado Springs Independant Newsweekly wrote that the event has left behind "independent investigations by police, the American Civil Liberties Union of Colorado and peace activists; photographs and videotape, which raise questions about the actions of Colorado Springs police; and promises by parade chairman John O'Donnell to ensure "this never happens again." *And goes on to recount how two police officers forcefully dragged an elderly woman across the sidewalk leaving her with large patches of road rash and bruises for which she was sent to a local hospital for treatment.*

Frank, a retired Catholic priest, was treated to what the police call a "pressure-compliant hold". Other officers shoved and twisted the arms of the elderly peace protesters, one breaking a sign over his knee another un-holstering his stun gun and pointing it as the parade marched past them. According to the same article, not even the mayor of Colorado Springs was willing to order the officers to stop "We asked the mayor personally if he would do something, and he looked over his shoulder and said, "I'm busy,' and walked away," says Joshua Cabrera, a student and researcher who came to see the parade with his wife and kids."

All of this erupted because, according to parade organisers and spokespeople, the parade doesn't want to promote social issues and these would-be marchers were advocating peace, which to them is a social issue. However there are marked inconsistencies in the attitudes of these officials in regards to what constitutes a social issue, allowing not only Democratic and Republican candidates to use the parade to promote themselves but they also allow uniformed military personnel representing the American Armed Forces to march in the parade.

*An editorial from the Colorado Springs Gazette, which appeared on March 20th, only a few days after the parade alleged that the protesters had engineered the entire thing in order to gain publicity for their cause and calling the protesters "*Agitators" *and* "Parade crashers" *the editorial went on to accuse the protesters of using duplicitous methods for getting into the parade calling it "*Subterfuge" *and making an insensitive and callous joke of the woman who's physical condition didn't allow her to move as quickly as the police could drag her.*

This editor is not going to posit his own views on this altercation, rather I'm including the URL's for the two articles I've cited above as well as one where you can see more of the pictures the protestors took at the event.

The editorial can be found here
www.gazette.com/onset?id=20365&template=article.html
while the article from the Co. Springs Independent Newsweekly is located here
www.csindy.com/csindy/2007-03-22/news.html
Photos of the clash between protesters and police can be seen here
http://csaction.org/StPatsDay/31707.html
Both the articles quoted here can also be read on the Christian Radical blog

This episode could serve as a good reminder that the price of freedom is still eternal vigilance. CR<

Reflections on Radical Hospitality

Amy L. Dalton

In January, I traveled to Olympia, Washington for a regional conference on Anarchism and Christianity. About forty of us gathered together first for an evening session at the Bread and Roses Catholic Worker Community Center, and then for a long day of workshops in the "Organic Farmhouse" on Evergreen State College's sprawling campus. Driving to the farmhouse involved winding through a rainforest wilderness, and I had to repeatedly remind myself that friends were waiting. Mossy swamp monsters rose from the green-carpet-earth at every twist and turn — were they ominous warnings, or were they pointing the way?

And yet I arrived. The two-day experience was framed for me by the theme of "hospitality," or "reception." Much of this was at a very cut and dry level — Thursday night's session was a roundtable discussion on what ordinary people could do to provide shelter for homeless people; following that we out-of-towners were welcomed into the homes of a dozen or so generous local hosts. And on Friday, we had to scramble when the group that had agreed to cook us lunch failed to show up! A makeshift kitchen team cobbled together a meal — stone-soup style.

I know in my bones that these tangible acts of hospitality are intimately connected to our ability to receive each other and be received as fellow travelers at a deeper level. Yet sometimes it is difficult to see this connection. We fancy that when Martha entered the kitchen, she ceases to frame the space — when the opposite is in fact true. She receives Jesus who is then able to receive Mary. This is so important because Mary is constantly among us and within us, asking for space to use her mind. We must see these two moments of reception as part of a cohesive call — and find in ourselves the possible response.

I caught a glimpse of that call and response in Olympia, amidst the swamp monsters and stone soup. This is my attempt to make sense of it.

The first moment of clarity came to me during the morning session on Friday, when we discussed the concept of "dual power" — shorthand for the strategy of building parallel institutions that displace the work of the state with community-based structures, such as cooperative economic institutions, community-controlled media, and the "personalist" hospitality network envisioned at our Thursday evening session. This idea, which is encapsulated in the syndicalist call to "build the new world in the shell of the old," is fundamentally about the labor of hospitality. The work that goes into such a building up is the shrouded yin-labor of the household, the labor that produces and reproduces our families, our communities, our very selves. Within our mainstream structures, this work is absurd and alienated because the domination system takes its fruits from us, inflicting on them the wounds of caste, violence, and separation. But when we build our own structures — when we turn away, step aside, and carve another circle — we are able to redeem this building-up labor, and thus return to its essence. This experience is deeply healing because the labor we are talking about really is the labor of creation — and thus what we are really doing is healing our relationship with our Creator God.

Yet sometimes the task of making space for each other is very difficult. During the workshop on environmentalism, our group experienced this difficulty firsthand. One of the panelists was making an argument that the Bible mandated a vegan diet. This was hard for a number of audience members to accept, since Jesus fed people fish and Hebraic law instructs people on when to eat meat and dairy. The dialogue became tense before we could hear the details of the presenter's analysis, and I think before we could really consider what was going on underneath. I went away from the session feeling that both the presenter and the attendees had failed to be hospitable with each other — and somehow this felt like a very large failure, like something that demanded attention.

Making the space to think about this took me a few weeks. But as so often happens, God conspired with me to carve it out. I had been thinking for a while that it was time to re-think the question of meat in my diet, and as Lent drew near, this seemed the obvious choice for my discipline. Completely without seeing the connection, I also set myself a goal of re-reading Paul's letters during the season.

Paul has some specific instructions regarding the eating or not eating of meat. They are set in the context of a larger discussion of how to deal with the diversity of lifestyles and practices in the early church. It often feels like he is trying to have it both ways, but he repeatedly opts to give respect to the more

abstentious habit. In Romans 14:21, for example, he writes: “Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for you to make others fall by what you eat; it is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother or sister stumble.” He repeats this general orientation again and again: don’t do this thing if it will negatively affect others in your community.

These dietary practices Paul is referring in this passage are part of a broader collection of purity laws in the Hebrew tradition, a strange brew of ritual and habit that, at root, connect to the desire to create a balanced human community living in just and harmonious relationship with itself and its environment. I wonder if we could look at the inkling to adopt an extreme vegan diet as similarly rooted in the pursuit of purification. Indeed, our current relations with animals and the earth are imbalanced and tainted at a near-totalizing degree. There is next-to-no situation where we can consume any sort of animal product without participating in cruelty that is unjust and unharmonious to the circle of life — without, metaphorically speaking, boiling a calf in its mother’s milk.

Now, Paul’s admonitions to respect those who would refrain from eating meat is at some level duplicitous — it is not because he thinks this position is necessary. He believes that in Christ there is ultimately no more need for laws and systems to create this pure harmony, but he wants to build a community of believers in which the emotional level at which some people still feel the need to practice habits of purification can be respected and honored, so as to aid in their spiritual journey. The habits are to be aided, then, not because they capture a universal truth or are necessary for salvation, but because breaking them could offend or “put a stumbling block” in the way of “the weak believer.” Another way of saying this is that Paul builds his ethics around the imperative of hospitality, not the imperative of purification. He believes Christ has already taken care of the latter, but that the former is work that we must share in.

Paul’s repeatedly uses this word — “weak” — to refer to those who are affected by the breaking of certain traditions, including the eating of certain foods. The quick and simple reading of this binary is that “weak” implies lesser and “strong” better — but this assumption is hasty and probably culturally conditioned. Setting Paul’s words in the context of the privileged position that Jesus gives to the small, the last and the least in the Beatitudes, the passage takes on another tone. We see in the “weak” person a certain fragility, tenderness, and sensitivity that is in fact precious.

I felt that this was the case with our presenter — I felt that this was the experiential truth that she had to bring. She was, for some reason, attuned to the pervasiveness of this impurity. She was the “weak one” who, in her being, was unable to roll with the brokenness between our human community and our natural world. Others were perhaps “free” — as Paul puts it — “free” enough to not “need” to respond to the visceral imbalance, the pervasive impurity of our relationships with the world. One attendee even expressed this directly to the presenter: “I understand what you are saying,” he said, “but I think you are underestimating what happens when a Christian kneels at the feet of Jesus.” For him, Jesus provides the answer and the purification that renders all other needs non-urgent.

This attitude tears at someone who is viscerally in touch with the living pain of this world. Knowing what we know now — what Christians have done in the name of such freedom — shouldn’t we rightly ask if this confidence is advisable, or fitting? Yet what we must understand is that even without knowing this legacy, Paul argues again and again against such a dismissal. He argues that the freedom of a Christian is the freedom to choose to respond to imperative put forth by the weakest one. And indeed, when looked at with reference to the privileged position of “weakness” in the Sermon on the Mount, we see that this role — that of the one who feels she cannot be reconciled to the world as it is — is a privileged, invocatory role. To be hospitable then to this person is a deeply important Christian task, one that has to do with our own wholeness as well as hers. An ethic of radical hospitality links the yearning for purification that the “weak” ones feel, and marry it with the imperative for hospitality: we need to receive that which asks of us to receive it.

I admit I am more concerned with what this meant for the dynamics of our conversations than with what food we purchase for any future gathering. Surely we need to cook vegan if anyone has those dietary needs — but what do we need to do with the person who is telling us that we all need to *be vegan?* This is the question that we have not answered! Perhaps there is a need to receive this admonition with grace, even when it is difficult. Perhaps this need is not so much about the question put forth per se, but about the ability to see ourselves as involved in and accountable to this collective, interdependent work of purification. Because they need to speak this, I need to be able to hear it, and respond.

It is often precisely when we need to be received, that we are the most difficult to receive. I know this through personal experience. I find somehow even those who love me dearly pull back in visceral wariness when I am vulnerable. I have to work so as not to be such a live wire in these times, so as to be more "receivable." At times, I don't feel that "the strong ones" do not to do much work to receive me... and Paul's message seems to be that they should. He says that those who feel themselves immune must not judge those who feel fragile, and those who feel fragile must not judge those who feel themselves to be immune (paraphrase, Romans 14:3). All of us together must work to build up the body in harmony, but Paul addresses those who see themselves to be immune first.

I will offer a counter to this – or perhaps a gentle corollary. Alongside admonishing Christians not to put a stumbling block in the way of a "weak" believer, Paul also refers repeatedly to Jesus as the stumbling block par excellence that the nation of Israel stumbled over. In this contrast, I see a sort of mirroring how God feels toward Israel – the one who wrestles with, or goes directly to, God. In this directness there is also a fragility. I see a sort of dual stance that God takes toward those who take in the brokenness of the world (and I would put myself in this category). There is a deeply sympathetic and protective love for that role, and yet also an unwillingness to let the fragile energy be the singular subject of history, or even of any one life story.

And it is good, I think, that God sees us in this complex way. Our fragility is blessedness and bane, at once. If we can only see one side of it, then we create tragedy in our wake; chaos in our communities. The burden of this danger is one that the "weak" must share with the "strong."

This danger is illustrated with utter and horrible beauty in a movie called "The House of Sand and Fog." The film tells the story of a woman and a man and how they both believe that they need a certain house in order to be saved. But they do not need the house — what they need is each other; what we need is each other. The woman is very fragile and in touch with her fragility — she is losing her house and she believes that she needs it. The man is very strong — the kind of reverent strength that Paul speaks of; one that invokes confidence that the things that are coming to him, including the house, are blessings from on high. The woman's need and the man's confidence are the frame of the story, but underneath it all is much more complex.

At one of the points in the movie — when the viewer still has laden, living hope — the man explains to his son why they must receive the woman: because when an injured bird flies into your house, he says, it is really a blessing; it has chosen you to be its caretaker. At his direction, his wife and son try to make space for that bird to rest and heal inside their home. But his clarity comes too late; it comes after too much judgment of her weakness. Too alone, she has allowed a very old and suspect energy into her life, ostensibly to defend her and get her what she "needs." This energy is neither the privileged weakness of the one who wrestles, nor the cleansed strength of the one who believes — and it redeems neither of them.

This same energy has clamored at us in many moments throughout history when the relationship between the "strong" and the "weak" become very confused and out of balance. It also, I believe, clamors at it in smaller moments — at conferences, in collective houses, in community controversy — when we focus on attributing the bravado in another's strength, or the volatility in another's weakness, rather than trying to comprehend the core of both. But we must re-focus on their core. Each of us has inside both bird-like fragility and reverent strength — and they are singing, albeit cacophonous, of the possible harmony. What a world it would be if these energies could receive each other! Then we would, together, birth our spiritual freedom. <

The Age Of Treason

An Easy Essay By Peter Maurin

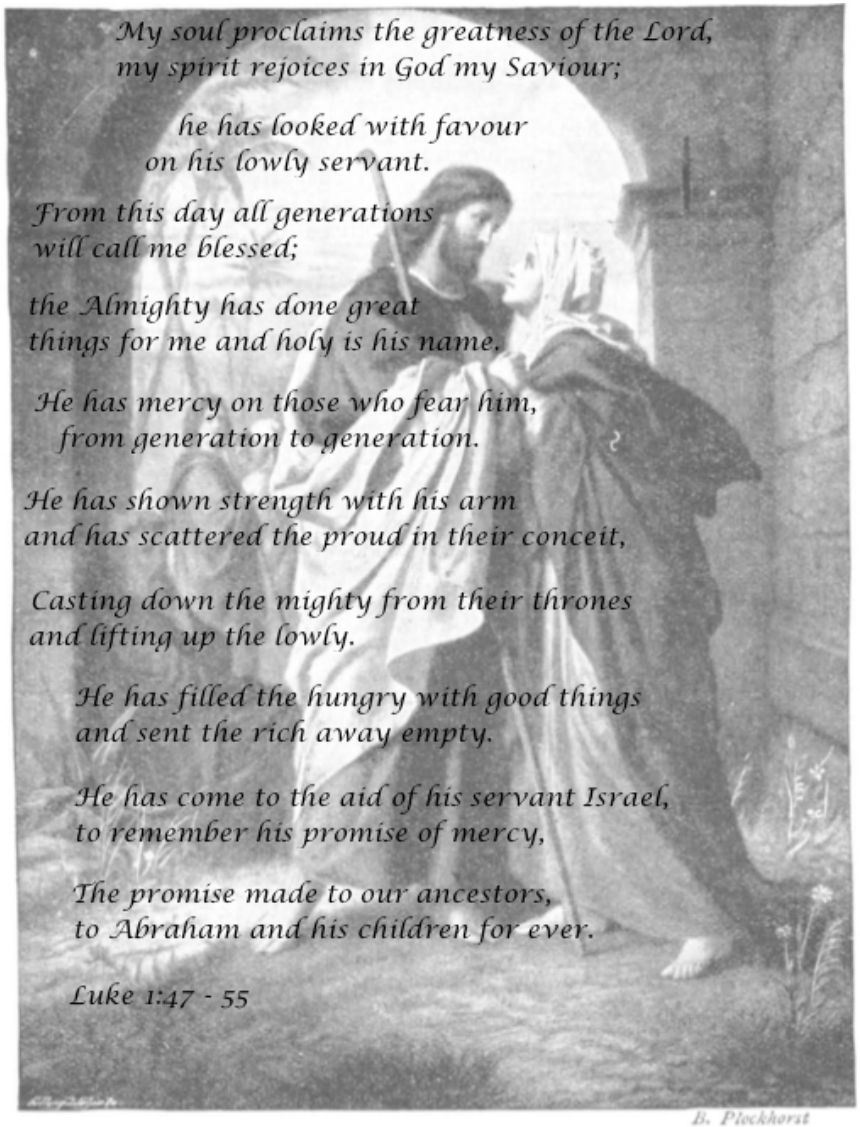
1. Pope Pius IX and Cardinal Newman
   consider liberalism,
   whether it be
   religious, philosophical, or economic,
   the greatest error of the nineteenth century.

2. Modern liberalism
   is the logical sequence
   of the so-called age of Enlightenment-
   the age of Voltaire, Rousseau, Thomas Paine-
   sometimes called the Age of Reason
   in opposition to the Age of Faith.

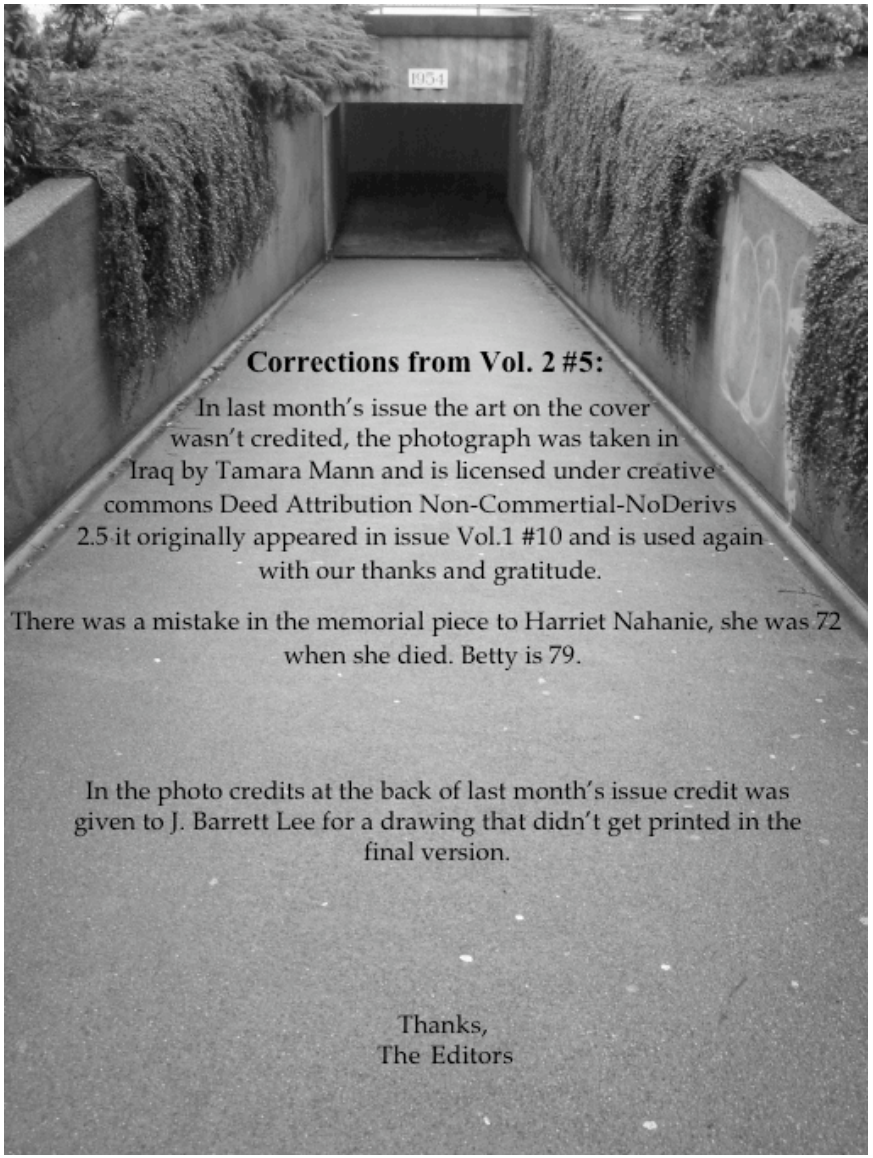
3. By sponsoring nationalism and capitalism
   modern liberals
   have given up the search for truth
   and have become paid propagandists.

4. Modern liberals have ceased to appeal to reason,
   and have chosen to appeal to prejudice.

5. So the Age of Reason
   has become the age of Treason,
   as Julien Benda points out
   in his book entitled:
   "The treason of the Intellectuals".


My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour;
he has looked with favour
on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations
will call me blessed;
the Almighty has done great
things for me and holy is his name.
He has mercy on those who fear him,
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm
and has scattered the proud in their conceit,
Casting down the mighty from their thrones
and lifting up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty.
He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,
to remember his promise of mercy,
The promise made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and his children for ever.
Luke 1:47 - 55
B. Plockhorst

CHRIST TAKING LEAVE OF HIS MOTHER.


1954
Corrections from Vol. 2 #5:
In last month's issue the art on the cover wasn't credited, the photograph was taken in Iraq by Tamara Mann and is licensed under creative commons Deed Attribution Non-Commertial-NoDerivs 2.5 it originally appeared in issue Vol.1 #10 and is used again with our thanks and gratitude.
There was a mistake in the memorial piece to Harriet Nahanie, she was 72 when she died. Betty is 79.
In the photo credits at the back of last month's issue credit was given to J. Barrett Lee for a drawing that didn't get printed in the final version.
Thanks,
The Editors

We Believe So We Speak

2nd Corinthians 4:13

Steven Woods is currently serving a death sentence at a state prison in Texas. He has a blog at www.drivemovement.org If you would like to write to Steven you can send mail to Steven Woods #999427 Polunsky Unit 3872 FM 350 S Livingston, TX 77351.

Brandon Gallaher was raised in the White Rock area of BC and now studies theology in England. He was received into the Eastern Orthodox Church in 1994.

John Dear is a Jesuit priest, peace activist, and the author/editor of 20 books on peace and nonviolence, including most recently "You Will Be My Witnesses" (available from Orbis Books). He lives in New Mexico. For further information, see: www.johndear.org his article is reprinted here with his permission.

Caitie is an active member of the Lane County Catholic Worker. She served as a live- in Worker at the St. John Bosco House in Eugene, Oregon for 15 months. Currently she is a member of the East Blair Housing Cooperative. She is currently working towards a Master's Degree in Social Work.

Frank Cordaro lives in the Des Moines Catholic Worker as a founding member. From 1985, to Aug of 2004, he served as a parish priest in rural Iowa. He has served over 4 1⁄2 years of jail and prison time for his acts of civil disobedience including a Plowshares action in May of 1998. Frank works full time for peace and justice and is preparing a collection of his writings and sermons from the last 25 years. You can read his writings at www.desmoinescatholicworker.org

Amy L Dalton helped to organise the Christianity and Anarchism Conference that took place in Olympia Washington, this past January. She has been involved with the Philadelphia Indymedia collective, and currently lives in Oregon.

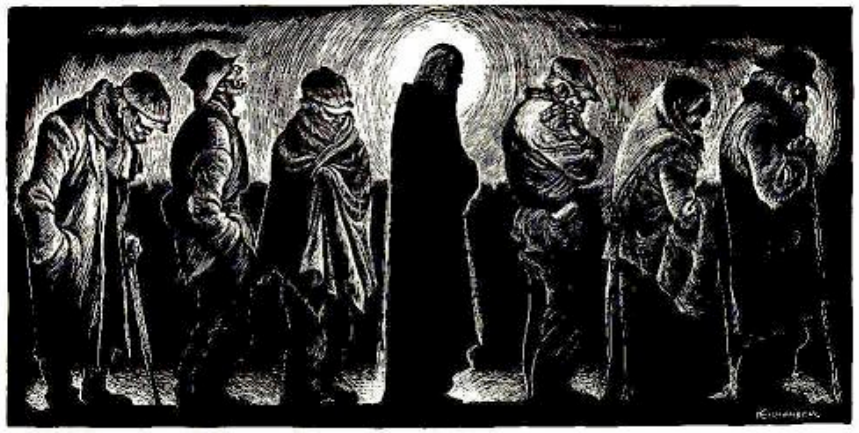
Peter Maurin was a visionary, poet and philosopher, he is the original founder of the Catholic Worker movement together with Dorothy Day.

Chris Rooney took most of the photography in this issue; other images are thanks to Kevin Larimee, Fritz Eichenberg, the Internet, and Darla, one of the protesters at the Saint Patrick's Day parade in Colorado Springs Co. The cover image was taken by Mike Hastie, a Vietnam veteran, photographer, and peace activist from Portland Oregon.

The Christian Radical is edited and formatted by Chris Rooney and Karl Germyn in British Columbia Canada. It is the monthly publication of the Vancouver Catholic Worker community,
http://ca.geocities.com/vancouvercatholicworker

If you would like to support The Christian Radical there are lots of ways you can; we always need new and original artwork and written content. The deadline for each issue is the 25th of the previous month we accept submissions any time at **the.christian.radical.zine@gmail.com**

You can read the zine and some of our back issues for free in a downloadable format at **www.vancouverdiy.com/christianradical.htm** if you would like to be informed when that site is updated please write us at **the.christian.radical@gmail.com** if you would like to help spread this zine by printing it in your own city or town you can request the printer friendly version, it can be e-mailed to you monthly.



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